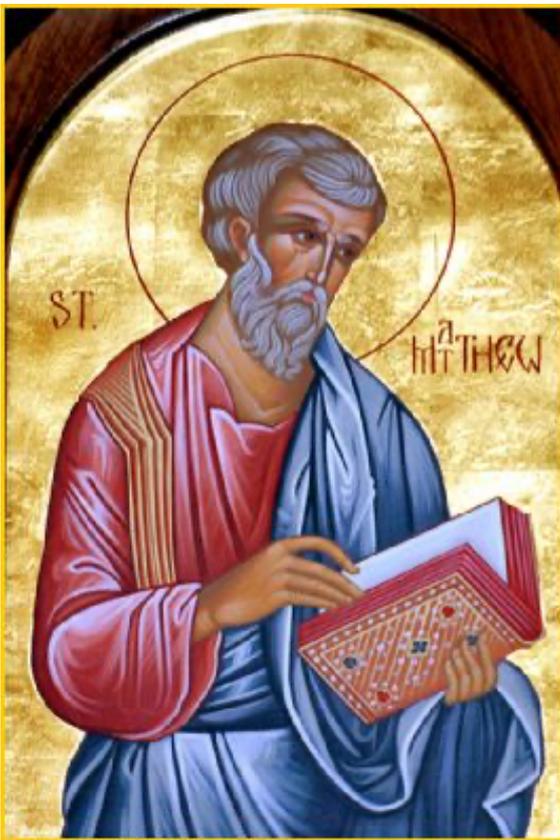


25th Sunday After Pentecost

Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew

16 / 29 November



Resurrection Tropar, Tone 8: Thou didst descend from on high, O Merciful One! / Thou didst endure the three-day burial / to free us from our sufferings! / O Lord, our Life and Resurrection, glory to Thee.

Troparion of St Matthew tone 3: O Apostle Matthew, thou didst hear the Voice of the Word/ and receive the light of faith./ Thou didst abandon the office of publican/ and proclaim Christ God's Self-emptying./ Ask that those who praise thee may receive forgiveness and great mercy.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 8: By rising from the tomb Thou didst raise the dead and resurrect Adam/ Eve exults in Thy Resurrection, / and the world celebrates Thy rising from the dead, O Greatly Merciful One.

Kontakion of St Matthew tone 4: When thou didst cast away the publican's balance/ thou didst take the yoke of righteousness/ and become a merchant rich in wisdom./ Thou didst preach the Word of truth/ and rouse the slothful by describing the Last Judgment.

Matins Gospel III

EPISTLE: Ephesians 4: 1-6

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, With all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism; One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

I BESEECH YOU TO HAVE A WALK WORTHY OF THE CALLING WITH WHICH YOU WERE CALLED

Great has the power of Paul's chain been shown to be, and more glorious than miracles. It is not in vain then, as it would seem, nor without an object, that he here holds it forward ...It is not merely being a prisoner that is honourable, but being so for Christ's sake ...Nothing is equal to this ...But what is this calling? You were called as His body, it is said...You have Christ as your head; and though you were 'enemies,' and had committed misdeed out of number, yet 'He has raised you up with Him and made you sit with Him' (Eph. 2:6) ...But how is it possible to 'walk worthily' of it? 'With all lowliness.' Such a one walks worthily. This is the basis of all virtue. If you are lowly, and realise what you are, and how you were saved, and will take this recollection as a motive to all virtue ...The lowly-minded man is able to be at once generous and a grateful servant. 'For what do you have,' he says, 'that you did not receive?' (I Cor.4:7) ...Even in your good deeds be lowly; for hear what Christ says, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit' (Matt.5:3), and He places this in first order ...How is it possible to forbear, if a man is passionate or censorious? ...If you, he would say, are not forbearing to your neighbour, how shall God be forbearing to you? ...Wherever there is love all things are to be borne ...

THERE IS ONE BODY AND ONE SPIRIT

The love which Paul requires of us is no common love, but that which cements us together, and makes us cleave inseparably to one another, and effects as great and as perfect a union as though it were between limb and limb. For this is that love which produces great and glorious fruits. Hence he says, there is 'one body;' one, both by sympathy, and by not opposing the good of others, and by sharing their joy, having expressed all at once by this figure. He then beautifully adds, 'and one Spirit,' showing that from the one body there will be one Spirit ...God has called you all on the same terms. He has bestowed nothing upon one more than upon another. To all He has freely given immortality, to all eternal life, to all immortal glory, to all brotherhood, to all inheritance. He is the common Head of all; 'He has raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Jesus Christ' (Eph. 2:6). You then, who in the spiritual world have such great equality of privileges, how is it that you are high-minded?

St. John Chrysostom. Homilies IX, X, XI on Ephesians IV. B#57, pp. 94, 96, 97, 99, 102.

for the Apostle: I Cor . 4:9-16

THE GOSPEL According To St. Luke 10: 25-37

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" So he answered and said, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbour as yourself.'" And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' So which of these three do you think was neighbour to him who fell among the thieves?" And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

The Parable of the Good Samaritan begins with a theological question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" It ends with a description of a person giving first aid on the roadside. It begins with the greatest Christian commandment, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart ..." and it ends with payment of room and board at a hotel.

Let us take a closer look at this parable which has been called by some the greatest, by others the second greatest parable Jesus ever told.

In answer to a question put to Him by a lawyer: "Who is my neighbor," Jesus told the following story. A man (no name or nationality is mentioned) was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho. He fell among robbers who stripped him, beat him, and left him half-dead. By chance the first person to come along was a priest, a fellow Jew, a pillar of the temple, a man of God, whose sacred calling it was to be a neighbor to every person. Yet, "when he saw him he passed by on the other side." The second person to come along was a Levite. He, too, was affiliated with the temple; he sang in the choir. Yet, he, too, passed by on the other side. The third person to come along was a Samaritan. He was a half-breed, looked down upon by the Jews who had no dealings with any Samaritan. Among the Jews the word "Samaritan" was the most unsavory word one could use. It meant "dog" or "devil." You remember that when Jesus asked the Samaritan woman for a drink at Jacob's well, she was so surprised that she said, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" For the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus took this word "Samaritan" which at that time was the dirtiest word one could call a Jew and exalted it to the point where to call anyone a Samaritan today is to pay him a great compliment. All because of this story. What the two pillars of the temple did not do, the unknown Samaritan did. When he saw the wounded man by the side of the road, he had compassion. He went over to him, bound up his wounds, placed him on his donkey, brought him to a hotel and took care of him. He went far beyond the call of duty. He stayed with him all night. The next morning, as he was about to leave, he gave the innkeeper extra money and said, "Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back." He gave the innkeeper virtually a blank check for the wounded man's care.

What Jesus Is Really Saying.

Through this parable Jesus was saying to the Jews of His day: if a despised Samaritan, whose very name is a curse word, whom you do not even consider a neighbor, and who has an inferior faith compared to yours, if he will not hesitate to go and rescue a Jew in trouble, how much more ought you who are God's chosen people; you who have experienced the love of God; you who have the true religion; how much more should you be willing to translate your religion into works of love.

We Are Like the Priest and the Levite.

Yet Jesus spoke through this parable not only to the Jews of old, but also to us today. What does He say?

The first point Jesus wants us to understand is that most of us are not like the Good Samaritan; most of us are like the priest and the Levite. We are too busy with ourselves to respond to the needs of others. We find a thousand excuses not to get involved. We pass by on the other side. We want others to be Good Samaritans to us, but not we to them. We are like the youngster who was asked what he learned from this story. He replied, "I have learned that when I get into trouble, somebody should help me out."

The Sin of Omission.

The sin of the priest and the Levite was the sin of omission. They did nothing when they could have done something. By doing nothing they left the wounded man to die. Is not this the most subtle kind of murder? Is it not of this sin that our Lord speaks when He says, "I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and you did not visit me." Is not the worst sin toward our fellow humans not to hate them, but to be indifferent toward them, to ignore them, to disregard them?

I never cut my neighbor's throat;
My neighbor's gold I never stole;
I never spoiled his house or land;
But God have mercy on my soul!
For I am haunted night and day
By all the deeds I have not done...

Religion on the Roadside.

The second point Jesus makes through this parable is that religion is to be practiced not only in Church, but also on the roadside. The priest and the Levite had confined religion to the duties they performed in the temple. Jesus reminds us that the supreme test of religion was right there on the roadside and they failed it.

An atheist once asked a poorly clad youngster, "If God is love, how come He didn't tell someone to give you clothes and shoes?" The boy thought for a moment and then replied, "I guess God told somebody, and somebody forgot." The priest and the Levite forgot.

The Wounded Are Still With Us.

The third lesson we learn from this parable is that the wounded are still with us. They are not just the physically wounded, but also those wounded by misery, by unemployment, by ghetto housing, by racism, by death, by contempt, by exploitation. A person once made a study of a crowd of people waiting on a corner for the light to change. In this jostling crowd he found a boy headed for the draft board, a new widow, a woman seeking a divorce, a man with an incurable disease, a little girl with a toothache, a couple trying to borrow money, and a family on its way to pick out a casket. There you have your neighbor. He may not always be lying on the side of the road. He may be walking, driving, or even running, but he is wounded nonetheless. He needs someone to be a neighbor to him.

Who Is My Neighbor?

Who is my neighbor? Often we like to answer this question for ourselves. And we set limits. "This one is my neighbor," we say. "That one is not." To the Jew the Samaritan was not a neighbor. But the answer Jesus gives precludes us from asking, "Who is my neighbor?" For everyone is my neighbor, said Jesus. Anybody in need. Anybody I come upon by chance. Anybody regardless of color or creed. It has been said that to the Greek every foreigner was a "barbarian"; to the Jew every stranger was a "gentile dog"; to the Mohammedan every alien was an "infidel"; but to Jesus every man — stranger or not, friend or foe — was a "brother." So, instead of asking "Who is my neighbor?" the Christian asks, "To whom can I be a neighbor?" The only standard is, "Does he need a neighbor?" If he does, we are delegated by Christ to be it. We have no choice in the matter — not if we wish to remain God's people.

Gordon Allport, the Harvard psychologist, has written, "In the United States — probably the most heterogeneous and complex society on earth — conditions are ripe for abundant group conflict and prejudice." Yet couldn't it perhaps be true that God brought us here from all parts of the world to afford us an ideal opportunity to learn who our neighbors are?

"Who is my neighbor?" asked the lawyer. He wanted it to be difficult to decide exactly who the neighbor was. He wanted the word to remain obscure. Having told the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus asked him, "Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed mercy on him." There you have the true neighbor. Any man. Anywhere. In need.

The Cure for Evil.

God did not create an evil world or an imperfect world. He created a world that was originally good. It is man who through sin, through the misuse of his free will, spoiled God's world. It is man who creates wars. It is man who creates millions of refugees after each war. It is man who pollutes. It is man who creates starvation through the unequal distribution of the world's goods. It was a man who set upon a fellow-man on the road to Jericho, robbed him, beat him and left him on the roadside half dead.

It is as if Jesus pointed to the mutilated body lying there by the side of the road and said, "That is the road of life. That is the kind of thing you will meet continually on life's way. There you have your neighbor. He is the man God commands you to love."

In this world we meet suffering, pain and evil. Not that evil is God's will. Not that it was created by Him. He wants to get rid of it just as much as we do. In fact, the Good Samaritan in today's Gospel is God Himself. He came into the world to destroy evil, to cancel out sin which is the source of most of our suffering. "The spirit of the Lord is upon me," He says in Luke 4:18, "Because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." Never did Jesus pass by on the other side of the road. He went wherever He knew there was suffering and need. When Jairus came to Him and told Him of his daughter at home on the point of death and besought Him to come, Jesus arose and followed him — right into the midst of need and suffering. The answer to the question "Why did God become man?" can be given in a few simple words of the parable: He saw and had compassion and came. The helpless, mutilated body on the side of the road was none other than

Humanity itself, lost in sin and doomed to death. The act of the Good Samaritan is the act of God stooping in Christ to raise us once more to health and freedom.

Jesus is still our Good Samaritan. When we are wounded, He heals us. When we have fallen, He lifts us up. When we are lost, He brings us home again. Like the Samaritan, He comes to us when all others have passed us by. He has compassion on us, binds up our wounds, and lavishes His love on us.

“Go thou and do likewise,” said Jesus to the lawyer after the man had heard the story. He says the same to us today. I have been a neighbor to you. I have shown you what love is like. I have picked you up out of your lost and wretched condition and made a new man of you: I have given you the parable of the Good Samaritan to show you that it is unthinkable for a Christian to “pass by on the other side,” withdrawing in aloofness from the wounds, the hungers and the needs of men.

The Good Samaritan is still the clue to the solution of many of the world’s problems today. For if we Christians had been true neighbors to our fellow humans, there would be no communism today. It is because the followers of Christ kept passing by on the other side of the road that communism came into existence: to help the poor and the downtrodden even if it had to enslave them.

Modern Samaritans.

This is not to say that there are no Samaritans today. There are. But their number needs to increase. Here are a few.

A Roman Catholic priest imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp offered to die in place of another inmate who had been picked to die of starvation along with nine others as punishment for a prisoner who had escaped. He told the commandant that he had no family and wanted to take the place of a man who had. His fellow prisoners said of him, “In a place like Auschwitz, where several hundred people died every day, it was still unforeseen that somebody would give up his life. It restored our faith in the human race/’

Kagawa, one of the great religious leaders of Japan, said that God came to him once in an isolated hut along the seaside. Stricken with tuberculosis as a young man, he was separated from even his own people, when one day a Christian missionary came to him with food and medicine. Kagawa reports that after the missionary had left, he asked himself, “Why would a stranger, not even one of my own countrymen, bother with me?” And the only answer he could reach was that God had come to him in and through this unknown Good Samaritan.

“Go thou and do likewise.”

Gems from the Sunday and Feasts Gospels
Anthony M Coniaris

for the Apostle: Matt . 9:9-13

Saints of the week

16 / 29 November - Nativity Fast - The Holy Apostle Matthew the Evangelist - the son of Alphaeus was at first a tax-collector, and it was as such that the Lord saw him in Capernaum and said to him: 'Follow Me!' Leaving everything, he followed Him (Matt. 9:9). After that, Matthew prepared a feast in his house, and there provided an opportunity for the Lord to voice some great truths about His coming to earth. After receiving the Holy Spirit, Matthew preached the Gospel among the Parthians and Medes and in Ethiopia, the land of the negroes. In Ethiopia, he consecrated as bishop one Plato, a follower of his, and himself withdrew to prayerful solitude on a mountain, where the Lord appeared to him. Matthew baptised the wife and son of the prince of that land, at which the prince was greatly enraged and sent a guard to bring Matthew before him for trial. The soldiers went off, but returned to the prince, saying that they had heard Matthew's voice, but had been unable to set eyes on him. The prince then sent a second guard. When this guard drew near to the Apostle, he shone with a heavenly radiance so brilliant that the soldiers were unable to look at him, but threw down their weapons in terror and returned home. The prince then went himself. When he approached Matthew, such radiance shone forth from the saint that the prince was blinded on the instant. But the Apostle had a kind heart: he prayed to God and the prince's sight was restored—unfortunately, only on the physical plane, his spiritual eyes remaining closed. He seized St Matthew and put him to harsh torture, twice lighting a fire on his chest, but the power of God kept him alive and unharmed. Then the Apostle prayed to God, and gave his spirit into His hands. The prince commanded that the martyr's body be put into a leaden coffin and cast into the sea. The saint appeared to Bishop Plato and told him where to find his body in its coffin, and the bishop went and brought them back. Seeing this new marvel, the prince was baptised and received the name Matthew. He then set aside all earthly vanity and became a priest, serving the Church in a manner pleasing to God. When Plato died, the Apostle Matthew appeared to this Matthew and counselled him to accept the episcopate. So he became a bishop, and was a good shepherd for many years, until God took him to His immortal Kingdom. St Matthew the Apostle wrote his Gospel in Aramaic, and it was very soon translated into Greek. It has come down to us in Greek, the Aramaic original being lost. Of this Evangelist, it is said that he never ate meat, but fed only on vegetables and fruit; Our Holy Father Sergius of Malopinega.

17 / 30 November — Nativity Fast — St Gregory the Wonder-worker, Bishop of Neocaesarea - Here is a man of God and a mighty wonderworker, who was called a second Moses! Born of wealthy and eminent pagan parents, Gregory at first studied Hellenic and Egyptian philosophy, but, seeing its barrenness and insufficiency, he turned to Christian teachers, particularly Origen of Alexandria, with whom he studied for several years and by whom he was baptised. Pure in soul and body, he desired to consecrate himself utterly to Christ, to which end he withdrew to the desert, where, in painful asceticism, he spent many years. His fame spread abroad everywhere, and Phaedimus, the bishop of Amasea, wanted to make him Bishop of Caesarea.

The discerning Gregory was warned of Phaedimus's intention, and hid in the wilderness from those sent to find him, so that they failed in their quest. Finally, Phaedimus consecrated him by devious means, and Gregory had to accept the work of a shepherd. The most holy Mother of God appeared to him, together with St John the Theologian, and, at her command, St John gave him the Creed that is known by Gregory's name. (The Nicene Creed, that Gregory was instrumental in establishing at the Second Ecumenical Council in 381). Who can enumerate the miracles of this second Moses? He commanded evil spirits, commanded mountains and waters, healed every sort of pain and ill, became invisible to his persecutors and had insight into both distant events and men's thoughts. He finished his earthly course in the year 270, in great old age. When he arrived in Caesarea as bishop, the whole town was composed of pagans, with just seventeen Christians. When he departed this life, the whole town was Christian, with just seventeen pagans. He therefore received a wreath of glory from his Lord in the heavenly Kingdom. Our Holy Father Nikhon of Radonezh' Our Holy Father Gennadius of Vatopedi;

St. Hilda, abs & eldress, who convened the Council of Whitby and adopted the orthodox Pascha.- Daughter of Hereric. Sister of Saint Hereswitha. Grand-niece of King Saint Edwin. Baptized in 627 at age thirteen by Saint Paulinus of York. Lived as a lay woman until age 33 when she became a Benedictine nun at the monastery of Chelles in France. Abbess at Hartepool, Northumberland, England. Abbess of the double monastery of Whitby, Streaneshalch. Abbess to Saint Wilfrid of York, Saint John of Beverley, and three other bishops. Patroness and supporter of learning and culture, including patronage of the poet Caedmon. Hilda and her houses followed the Celtic liturgy and rule, but many houses had adopted the continental Benedictine rule, and the Roman liturgy. Hilda convened a conference in 664 to help settle one a single rule. When the conference settled on the Roman and Benedictine, they were adopted throughout England, and Hilda insured the observance of her houses. Born 614 at Northumbria, England Died 680 of natural causes Representation - holding Whitby abbey in her hands with a crown on her head or at her feet; turning serpents into stone; stopping wild birds from stealing a corn crop; being carried to heaven by the angels

18 November / 1 December — The Holy Martyr Platon — From the town of Ancyra in Galatia, he was born and brought up a Christian. Even in his youth, he showed great perfection in every virtue. Platon did not conceal his faith in Christ the Lord, but preached it openly, denouncing idolaters for their bowing down to dead creatures in place of the living Creator. For this, he was brought before the governor, Agrippinus, for trial, and was harshly tortured by him. When the governor began to urge him to escape death and save his life by worshipping idols, Platon replied: 'There are two deaths: the temporal and the eternal; and there are two lives: the one transitory and the other without end.' Then Agrippinus put him to harsher torture. Among other tortures, he commanded that red-hot cannon balls be placed on his naked body, and that his flesh be cut into strips. 'Torture me more harshly', cried the martyr to the torturers, 'that your inhumanity and my endurance may be the more clearly seen. 'When the torturer spoke to the martyr about the philosopher Platon, saying that he was a pagan philosopher, he replied: 'I am not like Platon, nor he like me, except in our names. I learn and teach the wisdom that is of Christ, while he teaches the wisdom that is folly before God.' After that, Platon was thrown into prison, where he spent eighteen days without bread or water. When the warders marvelled that Platon could live without food for so long, he said to them: 'You are satiated by food, but I by holy prayer; you rejoice in wine, but I in Christ the true Vine.' He was finally beheaded with the sword in about 266, and received a wreath of eternal glory. The Holy Martyrs Romanus and Barulas; St. Mawes, bishop in Cornwall & Brittany (5th c.).

19 November / 2 December — The Holy Prophet Obadiah — Obadiah lived at the court of King Ahab, but, when the king turned away from true worship and bowed down to idols, Obadiah did not follow the king's example, but continued to serve the one, true God. When the wicked Queen Jezebel, because of her feud with Elias, hunted down all the prophets of God, Obadiah took a hundred of them and hid them in two caves, feeding them till the persecution was over (I Kings 18:4). A contemporary of the great Prophet Elias, Obadiah revered him greatly and hearkened to him in all things, being a follower and pupil of his. He lived nine hundred years before Christ, and entered peacefully into rest. The Holy Martyr Barlaam; Our Holy Fathers Barlaam and Joasaph the Heir; The Holy Martyr Heliodorus;

St. Egbert, archbishop of York (766) - He was son of Eata and brother of Eadbert, King of Northumbria. Having received deacon's Orders at Rome he returned to Northumbria and was appointed to the See of York in 732. He received the pallium in 735, thus becoming second Archbishop of York, the title having been lost to that church since the flight of Saint Paulinus to Kent. He was thus placed in a position to carry out many needed reforms in which he proved himself a strict disciplinarian, but was at the same time remarkable for sweetness and gentleness. One of his greatest works was the foundation of the famous School of York and its celebrated library. Alcuin was among his pupils. Eadbert resigned his throne to enter the monastery, and the two men spent their last years in retirement and prayer. Egbert's best known work is a collection of canonical regulations.

20 November / 3 December — Forefeast of the Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos — Nativity Fast — Our Holy Father Gregory of Decapolis — He was born in Isaurian Decapolis of eminent and devout parents, Sergius and Maria. When he had finished his schooling, his parents desired him to marry, but he fled to the desert and became a monk. He lived in various places: in Byzantium and Rome, and on Mount Olympus. Wherever he found himself, he made men marvel by his asceticism and miracles. It happened at times that his face was lit up with heavenly light, and that angels of God appeared to him; he looked upon the beauty of the angels and heard their blessed singing. He lived a long and godly life, and died peacefully in Constantinople in the ninth century, his soul entering into the joy of his Lord. St Proclus, Patriarch of Constantinople; The Holy Martyrs Eustace, Thespesius and Anatolius; St Isaac, Archbishop of Armenia; The Three Holy Persian Maidens;

At Bury St. Edmund in Suffolk, St. Edmund, king of E. Anglia, martyr (869) - On Christmas Day 855 a young man aged fourteen was acclaimed King of Norfolk by the ruling men and clergy of that county. The following year the leaders of Suffolk also made him their king. For fifteen years Edmund ruled over the East Angles with what all acknowledged as Christian dignity and justice. He himself seems to have modelled his piety on that of King David in the Old Testament, becoming especially proficient at reciting the psalms in public worship. From the year 866 his kingdom was increasingly threatened by

Danish invasions. For four years the East Angles managed to keep a shaky, often broken peace with them. Then the invaders burned Thetford. King Edmund's army attacked them there but could not defeat the marauders. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that the Danes 'killed the king and overcame all the land', adding that 'they destroyed all the churches that they came to, and at the same time reaching Peterborough, killed the abbot and monks and burned and broke everything they found there'. He thus remains the only English sovereign until the time of King Charles I to die for religious beliefs as well as the defence of his throne. For centuries the holy relics of King Edmund remained incorrupt, and innumerable miracles were wrought through his intercession. The skull of St. Edmund is at present in the basilica of St. Sernin in Toulouse, while his holy bones are in the private chapel of the Duke of Norfolk in Arundel Castle.

21 November / 4 December —The Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos — Nativity Fast — When the most holy Virgin Mary had reached the age of three, her parents, holy Joachim and Anna, took her from Nazareth to Jerusalem, to give her to the service of God in fulfilment of their promise. It was three days' journey to Jerusalem, but, going as they were on God's work, they did not find the journey difficult. Many of Joachim and Anna's kinsmen gathered to take part in this celebration, in which the invisible angels of God also took part. Maidens went ahead with lighted candles in their hands, followed by the most holy Virgin, led on either side by her father and mother. The Virgin was clad in royal and beautiful garments, like those of the 'king's daughter', the Bride of God (Ps. 44:9,10). Behind them walked many of their kinsfolk and friends, all bearing lighted candles. There were fifteen steps leading to the Temple. Her parents stood the Virgin on the first step, and she ran quickly to the top on her own, where the High Priest, Zacharias, the father of St John the Forerunner, met her and, taking her by the hand, led her not only into the Temple but into the Holy of Holies, the holiest place of all, into which none could enter except the High Priest, and that once a year. St Theophylact of Ochrid says that Zacharias was 'out of himself, and moved by God' when he led the Virgin into the chief place in the Temple, beyond the second curtain—otherwise there could be no explanation of his action. Her parents then offered sacrifices to God, according to the Law, received the priest's blessing and returned home, leaving the most holy Virgin in the Temple. She dwelt in the Temple for nine whole years. While her parents were alive, they visited her often. When they departed this life, the holy Virgin was left an orphan, and longed to remain in the Temple for the rest of her days, without entering into marriage. This being contrary both to the Law and Israelite custom, she was confided at the age of twelve to St Joseph, a kinsman of hers in Nazareth, so that she might, under the protection of betrothal, live in virginity and thus fulfil both her desire and the demands of the Law, for it was unknown in Israel at that time for a girl to vow perpetual virginity. The holy Virgin Mary was the first to do this, and was later followed by thousand upon thousand of virgin men and women in the Church of Christ.

St. Columbanus, abbot and founder of Luxeuil Abbey, France (615) - Born 543 at West Leinster, Ireland, handsome and educated, Columbanus was torn between a desire for God and easy access to the pleasures of the world. Acting on advice of a holy anchoress, he decided to withdraw from the world; his family opposed the choice, his mother going so far as to block the door. Monk at Lough Erne. He studied Scripture extensively, and wrote a commentary on the Psalms. Monk at Bangor under abbot Saint Comgall. In middle age, Columbanus felt a call to missionary life. With twelve companions (Saint Attala, Columbanus the Younger, Cummain, Domgal, Eogain, Eunan, Saint Gall, Gurgano, Libran, Lua, Sigisbert and Waldoleno) he travelled to Scotland, England, and then to France in 585. The area, though nominally Christian, had fallen far from the faith, but were ready for missionaries, and they had some success. They were warmly greeted at the court of Gontram, and king of Burgundy invited the band to stay. They chose the half-ruined Roman fortress of Annegray in the Vosges Mountains for their new home with Columbanus as their abbot. The simple lives and obvious holiness of the group drew disciples to join them, and the sick to be healed by their prayers. Columbanus, to find solitude for prayer, often lived for long periods in a cave seven miles from the monastery, using a messenger to stay in touch with his brothers. When the number of new monks overcrowded the old fortress, King Gontram gave them the old castle of Luxeuil to found a new house in 590. Soon after, a third house was founded at Fontaines. Columbanus served as master of them all, and wrote a Rule for them; it incorporated many Celtic practices, was approved by the Council of Macon in 627, but was superseded by the Benedictine. Problems arose early in the 7th century. Many Frankish bishops objected to a foreign missionary with so much influence, to the Celtic practices he brought, especially those related to Easter, and his independence from them. In 602 he was summoned to appear before them for judgment; instead of appearing, he sent a letter advising them to hold more synods, and to concern themselves with more important things than which rite he used to celebrate Easter. The dispute over Easter continued to years, with Columbanus appealing to multiple popes for help, but was only settled with Columbanus abandoned the Celtic calendar when he moved to Italy and adopted Eastern Orthodox Pascha. In addition to his problems with the bishops, Columbanus spoke out against vice and corruption in the royal household and court, which was in the midst of a series of complex power grabs. Brunehault stirred up the bishops and nobility against the abbot; Thierry ordered him to conform to the local ways, and shut up. Columbanus refused, and was briefly imprisoned at Besançon, but he escaped and returned to Luxeuil. Thierry and Brunehault sent an armed force to force him and his foreign monks back to Ireland. As soon as his ship set sail, a storm drove them back to shore; the captain took it as a sign, and set the monks free. They made their way to King Clothaire at Soissons, Neustria and then the court of King Theodebert of Austrasia in 611. He travelled to Metz, then Mainz, Suevi, Alamanni, and finally Lake Zurich. Their evangelization work there was unsuccessful, and the group passed on to Arbon, then Bregenz, and then Lake Constance. Saint Gall, who knew the local language best, took the lead in this region; many were converted to the faith, and the group founded a new monastery as their home and base. However, a year later political upheaval caused Columbanus to cross the Alps into Italy, arriving in Milan in 612. The Christian royal family treated him well, and he preached and wrote against Arianism and Nestorianism. In gratitude, the Lombard king gave him a track of land call Bobbio between Milan and Genoa. There he rebuilt a half-ruined church of Saint Peter, and around it he founded an abbey that was to be the source for evangelization throughout northern Italy for centuries to come. Columbanus always enjoyed being in the forests and caves, and as he walked through the woods birds and squirrels would ride on his shoulders. Toward the end of his life

came word that his old enemies were dead, and his brothers wanted him to come back north, but he declined. Knowing that his time was almost done, he retired to a cave for solitude, and died as he had predicted. His influence continued for centuries as those he converted handed on the faith, the brothers he taught evangelised untold numbers more, and his brother monks founded over one hundred monasteries to protect learning and spread the faith. Miracles ascribed to Columbanus include: to obtain food for a sick brother monk, he cured the wife of the donor; once when he was surrounded by wolves, he simply walked through them; at one point he needed a cave for his solitary prayers; a bear lived there; when Columbanus asked, the bear left; when he needed water in order to live in the cave, a spring appeared nearby; when the Luxeuil monastery granary ran empty, he prayed over it and it refilled; he multiplied bread and beer for his community; he cured several sick monks, who then got straight out of bed to reap the monastery's harvest; gave sight to a blind man at Orleans; he destroyed a vat of beer being prepared for a pagan festival by breathing on it; when the monastery needed help in the fields, he tamed a bear, and yoked it to a plough

22 November / 5 December — Afterfeast of the Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos — Nativity Fast — The Holy Martyr Cecilia — Born in Rome of rich and eminent parents, she had a firm faith in Christ the Lord and a great zeal for the Faith. Vowing life-long virginity to God, holy Cecilia wore a rough hair-shirt underneath the costly raiment that her parents gave her. When they forced her into marriage with a pagan, Valerian, she spent the first night urging her new-wedded bridegroom to go to Bishop Urban for baptism, and then himself to live a life of virginity. Embracing the Christian faith, Valerian also brought his brother Tibertius to it. Both brothers were very soon condemned to death for their faith, but their zeal did not falter in the face of death itself. Taken to the scaffold, these two brothers succeeded in bringing the captain of the guard, Maximus, to the Faith, and they all three suffered together for Christ the Lord. St Cecilia buried their bodies together and was then herself taken for trial, having unwearingly won over many pagans to the Christian faith. In one evening, she had won over four hundred souls. When the judge asked her whence came her daring, she answered: 'From a pure conscience and an unquestioning faith'. After harsh torture, she was condemned to be beheaded with the sword. The executioner brought the sword down on her neck three times, but failed to kill her; he only wounded her and the blood ran down from her wounds, being caught in kerchiefs and bowls by the faithful to use for healing. Three days later, Christ's martyr and virgin gave her spirit into the hands of her Lord, to rejoice with him in eternity. St Cecilia suffered with the others in about the year 230. Her relics are preserved in the church dedicated to her name in Rome. In the Western Church, St Cecilia is regarded as the patron of Church Music. St Kallistos, Patriarch of Constantinople; The Holy Martyr Menignus; Holy and Righteous Michael the Soldier; The Holy Apostles Philemon, Archippus and Apphia.